

#BXNFMXY CARRIER ROUTE 39  
#000029112174# 005-DTM 12-17  
SOUTHERN BAPT HISTORICAL 50000  
901 COMMERCE ST STE 401  
NASHVILLE TN 37203-3620

THE BAPTIST

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Former bandit reaches neighbors for Christ

SHOLA GABEYA, Ethiopia (BP) — Negussie Tameru sits upon simple furniture made from cow skin stretched across a wooden frame. Newspapers in a language he can't read decorate the walls of his small mud house. Like most others in the small town of Shola Gabeya, Ethiopia, Negussie never knows how he'll feed his family of seven tomorrow, much less next month.

But Negussie smiles from ear to ear when asked to talk about the hope he's found in Christ. The lack of material wealth doesn't bother the bandit turned pastor — he's got Jesus.

"I have a lot of needs, but I have peace in Christ," Negussie said.

Negussie's life isn't much different than most of his neighbors in Shola Gabeya and across Ethiopia. Nearly 80% of Ethiopians are farmers, most live completely by subsistence farming. The United Nations estimates that nearly two-thirds are illiterate.

But the most telling statistic of all is that local believers estimate that, outside of the evangelized southern region, less than 1% of Ethiopians are evangelical Christians. Most have no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Negussie is an exception.

He began his journey of faith

shortly after his career as a bandit was cut short.

At 18, Negussie was carrying a gun and using it to get what he wanted from anyone who crossed his path. Eventually he killed someone and spent six years in prison. But even that couldn't deter him from being a bandit. Once he was set free, he went back to his old life.

Then the local police took his gun away.

Left hopeless, without a means to support himself, Negussie took a job at the local Baptist mission as a guard. But no one trusted him. Locals told the missionaries that, if they hired him, they'd regret it.

Still searching for an identity in his post-bandit life, Negussie reluctantly paid 5 birr — more than two day's wages — for a Bible. It was the first book he'd ever attempted reading. He opened his new Bible to Revelation 21:7-8: "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Negussie quickly put the Bible away. Not only had he been a murderer, but he had been heavily involved in sorcery and idolatry as well.

"I got real scared and decid-



**WORD POWER** — Negussie Tameru was a bandit who terrorized everyone in Shola Gabeya, Ethiopia. Even six years in prison didn't deter him. Then God used an encounter with the Scriptures to speak to his heart. Now he serve as pastor of a church and envisions taking the good news of God's love to the surrounding countryside. (BP photo by Mike Creswell)

ed this was a bad book, so I hid it," Negussie said.

A few days later his boss at the mission, an Ethiopian believer, asked him if he wanted to hear about something really good. Negussie was ready for anything. That's when his boss told him about the forgiveness he could find in Christ.

"I cried and cried and cried that day," Negussie said. "I couldn't believe God would forgive me — not of all the things I'd done."

Negussie was so deeply touched by the gospel that he went to all of his children — even those who lived in the lowlands with his first wife — and made sure they under-

stood they could find forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

"They all became believers," Negussie said. "Now I teach my children the Bible and we pray together every night."

Now a pastor of a small church in Shola Gabeya, Negussie hopes to take the gospel to neighboring rural areas, which are dominated by a cultural Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity intermixed with indigenous religions.

"What really scares me is that on the Judgment Day we'll all be standing around the throne and my neighbors will point at me and ask, 'Why didn't you tell me?'"

### Looking back

#### 10 years ago

Clarke College in Newton is placed on academic probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges. A spokesperson says that the Baptist-affiliated junior college failed to comply with association conditions related to planning and finances.

#### 20 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist disaster relief unit treks 640 miles to Frankfort, Ky., for its shakedown cruise in response to the invitation of Kentucky Baptists, after extensive flooding put over 1,000 homes underwater in that state. The unit produces an estimated 1,000 hot meals per day for Dec. 16 - 19.

#### 50 years ago

The convention board, meeting in Jackson, elects J. D. Gray, retired pastor of First Church, Starkville, as president and approves a state mission budget of \$228,670 — approximately \$15,000 above the 1948 budget. The largest single item in the new budget is \$25,000 for church building evangelism.

### Christ at work around the world

◆ Doctors did not think IMB missionaries Tim and Iracema Kunkle should return to Uruguay with their autistic son, Steven. But the Kunkles asked Christian friends to pray for them and returned. Steven, 10, is now social and bilingual. He is in a regular school, has accepted Christ and is witnessing to his friends. One whole family and six other children are coming to church because of his testimony. Friendship with the wife of Steven's pediatrician has enabled Iracema to meet the director of a women's TV program and place Christian videos on the program. Iracema also has an ongoing ministry with parents of autistic children.

◆ In Armenia, a young group of believers is reaching Kurdish mountain villages whose people have a hunger for the gospel like that in the early days of the church. Hundreds of villagers will crowd into a room to watch the two-hour film, "Jesus," on a 13-inch television screen. House churches are taking root rapidly. Armenians are a window of Christianity to the Muslim neighbors that surround them. "I think God has done it intentionally," says Texan John Hilliard, a volunteer who has worked with them.

◆ IMB missionaries Skip and Julie Martin were asked by police academy officials in Guatemala to lead a Bible study for cadets. Skip and a local pastor were expecting 30 to 50 cadets. More than 300 attended. After the men shared their testimonies and the plan of salvation, six cadets prayed to receive Christ.

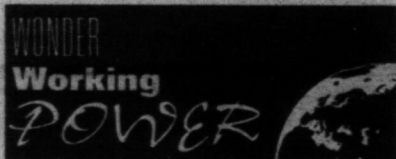


PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

DECEMBER 17, 1998

VOL. 122

No. 44



Lottie Moon  
Christmas Offering for  
International Missions

NATIONAL GOAL:  
\$110,000,000

### WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Youth Evang. Conf. set

3

Autos for missionaries

4

Evangelists ready to serve

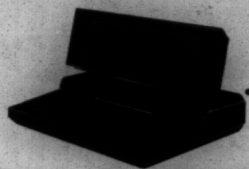
5

Mississippian ministers

6



## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



**William H.  
Perkins Jr.**  
Editor

### EDITOR

William H. Perkins Jr.

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Carl M. White

### EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE

Florence Larrimore

### CIRCULATION MANAGER

Renee Walley

### BOOKKEEPER

Betty Anne Bailey

### LAYOUT/DESIGN

Joylin Davis

### ADVERTISING/PROOFREADER

Debbie Sills

### EDITORS EMERITI

Don McGregor

Guy Henderson

### Baptist Record Advisory Committee:

Bettye Coward, Clinton;  
Charles Dunagin, McComb  
Larry Garner, Jackson;  
David Petty, Jackson  
Gary Richardson, West Point;  
Debbie Sills, secretary.

Postmaster: Send changes of address  
to The BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box  
530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Send  
news, communication, and address  
changes to The Editor, BAPTIST  
RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS  
39205-0530 (601) 968-3800  
Missrecord@aol.com

VOLUME 122 NUMBER 44  
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4  
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist  
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,  
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per  
year payable in advance. Economy plans  
available for cooperating Mississippi  
churches. Periodicals postage paid at  
Jackson, MS. Member: Association of State  
Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items —  
one calendar week prior to requested pub-  
lication date. Advertising — two calendar  
weeks prior to requested publication date.

# A strange mix, indeed

Of all the strange, extracurricular ways people celebrate the birth of Christ and the impending new year, one of the strangest has to be the mixing of these two events with alcohol.

Have you really thought about that? Why would anyone mark the birth of the One who gives eternal life, with the foul substance that condemns so many to eternal death?

Why would anyone mark the time of renewal and fresh starts, known as New Years, with the same old hangover year after year from the most dangerous and destructive legalized drug in this country?

It doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? At this time of year when alcohol abuse is at an annual high point, comes a most cautionary tale courtesy of The Learning Channel cable television network.

Those of us who are of a certain age and older remember vividly the events of October 1973 that brought the two great superpowers — the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. — to the brink of nuclear world war.

It was in October 1973 that Egypt and Syria launched the surprise attack on Israel that has come to be known as the Yom Kippur War. The U.S. rushed military supplies to its ally, Israel, while the Soviets poured war materiel to its allies, Egypt and Syria.

Tensions ratcheted upward when a United Nations cease fire broke down after two days. As Israel began to rout the Arab forces, Moscow grew anxious.

Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary of the communist party and supreme ruler of the U.S.S.R., sent a terse letter late one evening to U.S. President Richard Nixon. He threatened to take whatever action was necessary to prevent the defeat of the Soviet Union's allies.

Events accelerated rapidly after U.S. spy satellites detected elite Soviet paratroopers being loaded on transport aircraft. From the White House came a stern warning to Brezhnev and an elevation of U.S. military readiness to DEFCON 3 — a level of preparedness not seen in the post-World War II era. Nuclear forces on both sides were on high alert.

War was imminent. The fate of the world literally depended on Brezhnev and Nixon,

two men halfway around the world from each other, with fingers on the buttons that could instantly end civilization.

History reflects that those buttons were not pushed, the Yom Kippur War ended shortly thereafter, and everyone went about their lives.

The recent Learning Channel documentary on that fateful time, however, brought to light a little-known fact, 25 years after the war.

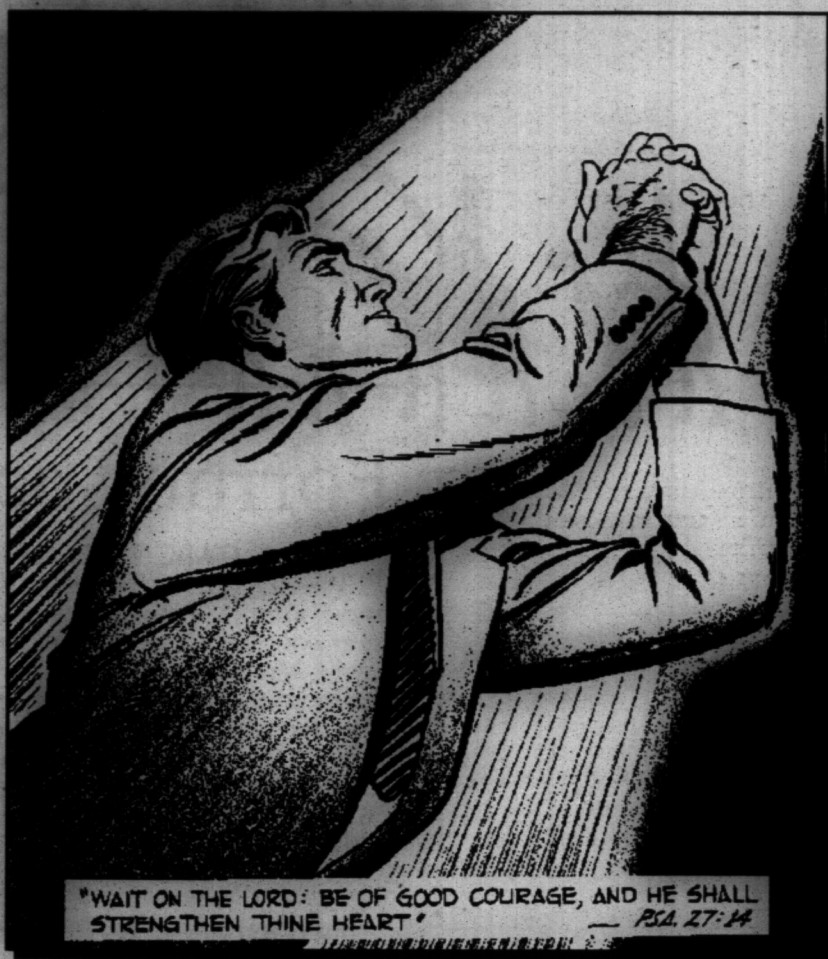
According to The Learning Channel's investigation and retelling, both Nixon and Brezhnev were drunk; sometimes to the point of incapacity, for much of the time the future of the world was in their hands.

Brezhnev's lifelong drinking problem was widely known. Nixon, apparently forlorn over Watergate and glimpsing his future, had himself begun to drink heavily on a daily basis.

When Brezhnev wrote his threatening letter, he was alone and drunk in the Kremlin, having dismissed his staff for the night so he could begin his binge drinking. When the letter was received at the White House, Nixon was apparently too drunk to come

## NO BR ON DEC 24

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the newspaper will not publish on Dec. 24. The next issue will be dated Dec. 31. All news items and advertising insertions submitted after Dec. 17 will appear in the Jan. 7 or Jan. 14 issues of the newspaper. For more information, contact The Baptist Record at (601) 292-3375 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



downstairs for a national security meeting.

According to The Learning Channel, the decision to move the nation to DEFCON 3 had to be made by a group of advisors.

Think about that. The world almost ended while the leaders of the two most powerful nations on earth struggled to make decisions through an alcohol fog.

Do you find it incomprehensible that such an important moment in history was driven by alcohol? Actually, it's no more incomprehensible than your own decision to drink.

You may not have the fate of the world in your hands, but you have your own fate in your hands. Your personal decision is just as important as Nixon's and Brezhnev's.

Use that power wisely. Make this holiday season an alcohol-free season. Make this new year an alcohol-free year. Don't compromise your witness.

What would Jesus do?

## GUEST OPINION:



### My Blessed Companion

By Linda McCullar, member  
First Church, Kosciusko

Such tenderness. Such patience. Such hope.

This man Jesus was a real man who lived and died almost 2,000 years ago. He is the Jesus of the Christian churches, but he is also the Jesus of the lambs who are too broken to hobble to a church, too ugly or too weak to dress appropriately, too wounded to risk another rejection, too unacceptable to hope any longer for acceptance.

If you are any of the above, you can shout for joy. You can jump and dance about with glee because, perhaps, you are now needy enough to find no glim-

mer of hope in a tinsel world, and needy enough to open the rusted door to your heart and let the King of Glory come in.

He will, you know. He will, in his splendor, in his might, in his majesty.

Long ago this man, this Son of God, left his home of glory and honor in Heaven and was born to a young virgin in a stable. We like to picture the stable as having an earthly kind of beauty and being filled with fresh, sweet-smelling hay.

Actually, I suspect, that stable was like other stables of the day: dirty, foul-smelling, damp,

and cold. I imagine that the dirt floor was covered with animal dung, some old and some new and wet. I don't think it was a likely place for the King of Glory to make his entrance.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ is still being born into filthy places; into hearts filled with failure, helplessness, and hopelessness; into hearts bloody and broken, ripped apart in the battles of life.

He still comes to hearts too tired to fight more battles, too wounded to wander another day in streets laden with dead ends.

The Blessed Companion can enter your heart in such a way that its broken parts don't matter any more. He might come to you with mighty armies of healing, or with quiet rivers of cool water, or with fields of flowers.

I can't say in which of his unlimited ways he might come but I can say, with the full backing of Heaven and its hosts of saints, that he *will* come.

Are you destitute enough to ask?



# Didlake, Buckles tapped for department heads

By Tim Nicholas, Director  
MBCB Communication Dept.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) executive committee promoted two long-time board employees to directorships during their meeting at the Baptist Building in Jackson on Dec. 8.

Jim Didlake, consultant in the Mississippi Baptist Brotherhood Department for 16 years, will replace Paul Harrell in that department.

Matt Buckles, consultant for 8 years in the MBCB Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department, will replace Julius Thompson as director of that department.

Harrell is transferring to the

part-time position of Partnership Ministries coordinator. Harrell replaces the retiring Bill Hardy.

Both Didlake and Buckles are expected to begin their new work in January.

Didlake, 55, is a native of Crystal Springs. He is a graduate of Mississippi State University in Starkville and earned the master

of religious education degree from New Orleans Seminary in New Orleans.

Didlake's work has focused on ministries to boys and on disaster relief.

Earlier he was minister of education and administration at First Church, Brandon,

1977-82; minister of education and youth at First Church, Russellville, Ky., 1969-77; and was Baptist Student Union

associate for Tennessee Tech in 1968.

He and his wife Marlene have one daughter.

Buckles, 42, is a native of Meadville. He is a graduate of Mississippi College in

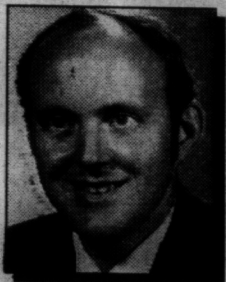
Clinton. He earned the master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees at New Orleans Seminary.

Buckles' work has focused on church building consultation and on bivocational ministers. He began in the department as a part-time employee while pas-

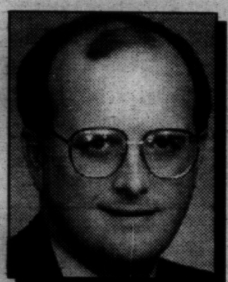
tor of Crossview Church, Brandon. He began full time work in 1992.

Earlier, he was pastor of Lowrey Memorial Church, Blue Mountain, 1986-90; Goss Church, Columbia, 1982-86; Sylvarena Church, Wesson, 1979-82; and Hamburg Church, Roxie, 1976-79.

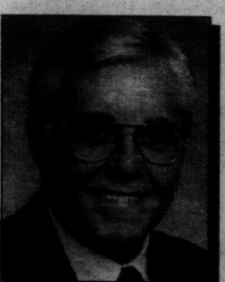
Buckles and his wife Karen have a son and a daughter.



Didlake



Buckles



Thompson

THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST  
*Record*

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

DECEMBER 17, 1998

VOL. 122

No. 44

## Youth Evangelism Conf. set for Dec. 28-29

Over 3,000 students and their leaders are expected for the 1998 Youth

Evangelism Conference Dec. 28-29 in A. E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton, according to Don Lum, youth consultant with the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Registration opens at noon on Dec. 28 with the first session starting at 2 p.m. The final session ends at 3 p.m. on Dec. 29.

This year's conference theme, "A Maze of Grace" is drawn from a popular song by the singing group Avalon, who will be featured in concert on Monday evening of the conference at 7:45 p.m.

Avalon is a modern pop group made up of four singers "who have come together with a common vision and a common desire to see something fresh and exciting happen with today's Christian music," according to Jody McBrayer of Tampa Fla., the tenor with the group. Other members are: Nikki Hassman, soprano from Waverly, Iowa; Michael Passons, tenor from Yazoo City, Miss.; and Janna Potter, alto from Baltimore, Md.

Also featured during the conference are:

- Ken Smith, an evangelist from South Carolina, featured speaker. Smith is the former chaplain for the football teams at

Florida State University and the University of South Carolina.

- Drama specialist Grant and Jennifer Medford of Alton, Ill. The Medfords bring a strong theatrical background from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. to their ministry of vocal and visual presentation of the Gospel.

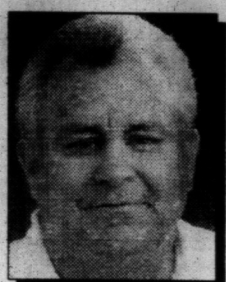
- Mike Harland, minister of Music at Broadmoor Church,

Jackson, worship leader.

Lum encourages church groups to preregister by sending \$5 per person by Dec. 18 to the Evangelism Department at the address given below. The fee includes breakfast Tuesday morning hosted by MC in the MC cafeteria from 7:15 to 8:30 a.m.

Lum anticipates a packed house. "Over 2,700 attended last year, and that was with the weather preventing churches from north Mississippi even coming," Lum said.

"Christmas time offers a unique opportunity to bring teens to hear God's message and to be challenged not only to a deeper spiritual walk, but to also



Smith

share their faith with others," Lum said.

For more information contact the Lum at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 968-3800, or toll-free outside of Jackson (800) 748-1651.



Harland

### 1998 YEC schedule

#### MONDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 28

- 12:00 Registration begins
- 1:15 Youth leaders/ counselors meeting
- 2:00 Welcome & Music — Mike Harland
- 2:30 Drama — Grant and Jennifer Medford
- 3:00 Worship Music — Mike Harland
- 3:20 Message — Ken Smith
- 4:00 Dismiss for dinner

#### MONDAY EVENING

- 6:00 Make-up counselors meeting
- 6:30 BREAKOUT GROUPS
  - Group #1 Coliseum — Ken Smith
  - Group #2 FBC, Clinton — Mike Harland
  - Group #3 Swor Auditorium — The Medfords
- 7:15 Break
- 7:45 CONCERT — avalon
- 9:00 Dismiss

#### TUESDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29

- 7:15 Breakfast, Student Center (preregistration tickets required)
- 8:45 BREAKOUT GROUPS
  - Group #1 Coliseum — The Medfords
  - Group #2 FBC, Clinton — Ken Smith
  - Group #3 Swor Auditorium — Mike Harland
- 9:30 Break
- 10:00 Worship music — Mike Harland
- 10:20 Message — Ken Smith
- 11:00 Lunch Break

#### TUESDAY AFTERNOON

- 1:00 BREAKOUT GROUPS
  - Group #1 Coliseum — Mike Harland
  - Group #2 FBC, Clinton — The Medfords
  - Group #3 Swor Auditorium — Ken Smith
- 1:45 Break
- 2:00 Drama — Grant and Jennifer Medford
- 2:10 Worship music — Mike Harland
- 2:20 Message — Ken Smith
- 3:00 Invitation & Closing



avalon



Medfords



Tell the Good News



The Saviour  
is Come!



# Autos needed for furloughing missionaries

By Carl M. White  
Associate Editor

For Tom Hearon Sr., of Ridgeland, missionary service is a very personal reality — his son and daughter-in-law, Tom and Bonnie, serve as International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries in Niteroi, Brazil.



**WHEELS FOR MISSIONARIES** — Larry (second from left) and Alicia (left, holding child) Braswell, furloughing missionaries from Brazil, receive the keys for a 1992 Dodge Caravan from Tom Hearon, Sr. (right) president of Macedonian Call Foundation of Mississippi, at the Braswell's arrival at the Jackson International Airport on Nov. 17, 1998. Macedonian Call provides automobiles for Mississippi missionaries furloughing in the state. (BR special photo).

When they came home on furlough in 1997, an immediate need was transportation. Fortunately, Hearon was able to help them out, but not all furloughing missionaries are as fortunate.

Hearon went on to form the Macedonian Call Foundation of Mississippi, a non-profit, tax-deductible organization dedicated to providing affordable transportation for missionaries on furlough in Mississippi.

"Being Southern Baptist all my life and having a son that is a missionary makes me keenly aware of the difficulty in securing transportation on furlough, especially short furloughs," Hearon said.

The first missionaries to receive a car from Macedonian Call were Larry and Alicia Braswell, also IMB missionaries in Brazil. The Braswells have four children.

Hearon met them at the airport when they arrived on Nov. 17 with the keys to a 1992 Dodge Caravan.

"I think Macedonian Call is a fantastic ministry, for the simple fact that missionaries are going to travel a great deal when they are in the states.

"To purchase a vehicle for a few months and then have to worry about reselling it is a difficulty," Larry Braswell said.

The Caravan is the foundation's first automobile, Hearon said. A second one has been donated and will be available for use in January 1999.

"Someone is coming in just in time to get this car," Hearon said.

Hearon began this ministry after learning that Baptists in Houston, Texas, have had a nonprofit foundation for this purpose since 1982. He visited them and, "They told me when you start this you are going to spend half of your life under the hood of a car.

Thus far, they've been right," he said.

Baptists in Texas have responded and a number of cars are now available to the missionaries in the area they serve, Hearon reported.

"We in Mississippi hope we can do the same thing for the missionaries in our area," he said.

Macedonian Call accepts the gifts of used automobiles and then leases the vehicles to furloughing missionaries who have "registered with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board that Mississippi is their home state and that they are furloughing in Mississippi," according to the bylaws of the foundation.

Missionaries who are coming home for short periods of time receive priority over those coming for longer periods of time, Hearon indicated.

"We realize that it is very difficult for a missionary to buy an automobile for a short-term rather than full-term furlough," he said, but under no conditions will an automobile be leased for more than 12 months.

Missionaries sign a lease agreement with Macedonian Call for \$100 a month, plus a \$100 security deposit. They are responsible for the general maintenance of the vehicle while in their possession. The foundation maintains insurance on the cars.

The Macedonian Call Foundation is looking for used cars and other donations for this ministry. For more information contact Tom Hearon at 6649 Richmond Grove Road, Ridgeland, MS 39157 or at (601) 956-7770.

## Lotz to recommend BWA council meeting in Cuba

WASHINGTON (BP) — Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Denton Lotz has announced he will recommend that an invitation from Cuban Baptists be accepted for the BWA General Council's July 2000 meeting to be held in Havana.

Lotz's announcement followed his return from a visit to Cuba Nov. 25-Dec. 1. Daniel

Carro, BWA regional secretary for Latin America, and Emmett Dunn, BWA youth director, were also on the BWA delegation that visited Cuba.

Lotz also issued a statement calling on the United States to end its longstanding embargo of Cuba, calling it "a failed policy."

Lotz's Dec. 2 statement, in its entirety, reads: "The embargo of Cuba by the USA is a failed pol-

icy which hurts precisely the people we want to help, the children, the poor, and the elderly. As a Christian concerned about the lives of people and relief of suffering, it seems to me that it is time to lift the embargo. Children and elderly and many patients in hospitals suffer from lack of antibiotics and other medical supplies. American Christians should be given free-

dom for quick and easy access to minister in Cuba. The embargo prevents Christians from performing their Gospel requirements of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick. If China and other more repressive countries are open to trade why not Cuba? The embargo hurts the hurting. With Canada and most Western European countries involved in trade and construction, with thousands of tourists (more than one million!) coming from Europe, the only effect of the embargo is to prevent American Christians from ministering in Christ's name.

"I urge the United States President and Congress to end the embargo and travel restrictions and allow citizens of the easier access to Cuba!"

The invitation to the BWA to hold a General Council meeting in the Cuban capital was extended by the Western, Eastern, and Freewill Baptist conventions, the BWA reported in a Dec. 2 news release.

While BWA leaders have visited Cuba and held different kinds of meetings, this would be the first BWA global gathering in Cuba since communist rule began there and the United States broke off relations with Cuba in 1961.

The historic Calvary Baptist Church in Havana would host the July 2000 meeting.

Lotz's recommendation will be considered during the BWA General Council's March 8-11 meeting in Washington.

### SEASON'S GREETINGS?

I recall the incident that at first amused me, then amazed me, and then it began to anger me. The news report was about an elementary school where one of the parents was complaining because for the Christmas play they were singing too many songs about Jesus. The complaint from the parent had escalated to a demand that it be stopped and a threat of legal action if it was not.

Can you imagine! Some music director in a school having the audacity to include songs about Jesus' birth in a Christmas play. How can these things be? My amusement quickly turned to amazement because these charges were not only serious — they were being taken seriously. Deep down inside of me I began to realize that we live in the same kind of society into which Jesus was born 2,000 years ago. A place where he would not be welcome — no room in the inn, no room in the school, no room in the stores, no room — well, just not much room for him anywhere.

The changes that have taken place over the past decade have been subtle and without fanfare as we have moved from Christmas just being commercialized to



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Christmas being just a season of the year. Does it catch your eye in stores and on cards that more and more the greeting is not "Merry Christmas," but rather "Season's Greetings," or "Happy Holidays." Why? Well now, if you will look in the card section most places will have cards for Christmas, others for Hanukkah, and others for Kwanza. Almost without recognition and certainly without official notification, Christmas — the celebration of God's sending his Son into the world — has become just one of a variety of happy winter activities, something to break up the gray of the sky and the cold wind of wintertime.

So Jesus, rather than being the "reason for the season," has become just one of the options of this time of the year. Pick out the one you enjoy the most. There are plenty of different emphases from which

to choose. You can have reindeer or a snowman, angels or little toy soldiers. Maybe your big deal is candy canes or holly, Santa Claus or umpteen elves. While others may say "Season's Greetings," I cannot! I will not! No, for me it must be and must remain, Christmas — that glorious moment of the year when we focus all of our attention on the great loving God reaching down to us to redeem us, to save us, to secure us, to satisfy us through his Son, his only begotten Son, Jesus.

Christmas is about children, family, food, songs, lights, drama, and smiles, but all of those things only have meaning as you come to know and see the essential place and the wonderful character of Jesus Christ, God's Son. For many people, you can remove everything about Jesus and hardly notice a difference in Christmas, but for those of us who believe, for those of us who have received him, for those of us who have met him personally, he not only caused all of Heaven to start singing but brought a buoyant joy that has filled our hearts day after day.

I wish for you and your family not "Season's Greetings," but a "Merry, Merry Christmas!"



# Evangelists aim for new conference focus

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP) — Jerry Drace has a little game he plays with strangers on airplanes. "I ask people what they do for a living, and invariably they ask me what I do. When I say I'm an evangelist, some of them go to the lavatory and never come back!"

For Drace, the game stems from a serious concern that the image of the evangelist in America isn't what it should be.

"We're seen as screamers, shouters, and Bible thumpers who give 30-minute invitations. TV evangelists fall under financial and immorality problems, and people develop false impressions of evangelists. The unsavory image often extends to men and women involved in music and drama evangelism, too," said the founder of the Jerry Drace Evangelistic Association in Jackson, Tenn.

As the new president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE), Drace has set out to change such images because, sadly, the mistrust runs deep in COSBE members' own denomination. Of the 40,000-plus churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), only 7,000 utilized evangelists in 1997, Drace said.

His own experience during 23 years of ministry confirms the statistics. "When I go to a church, sometimes they haven't had an evangelist in 15 years or they only use fellow pastors who they can trust," Drace said. "Usually, they've had a bad experience with an evangelist fleecing the people, telling sob stories, taking church rolls and putting everyone on mailing lists."

Trouble can run both ways, Drace said. Many evangelists have been burned by churches, too. One church in which Drace ministered collected a love offering for him and the team but kept most of it for themselves. "I didn't find out until I got home and I couldn't believe it," he said.

Through a new vision for COSBE aimed at building a positive image of its members, Drace hopes a new bond of trust will form between SBC churches and evangelists.

COSBE's purpose is to provide support, fellowship and education for Southern Baptist evangelists, but now Drace and other officers also are transforming the organiza-

tion into a vehicle for change — and they're starting with its membership roll.

"To be a member of COSBE now, all you have to do is have your pastor send a letter to the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) evangelism department stating you are in full-time evangelistic ministry and in good standing at the church. We think there should be more," Drace said.

A covenant of principles called "Affirmations of Accountability" is being strongly considered for those wishing to be recognized as COSBE members. The statements, all aimed at maintaining accountability, include personal promises to uphold theological doctrines, good finances, healthy family relationships and individual morality. A council of accountability, made up of NAMB executives and, will handle all violations of the standards and serve as an advisory team.

"The image of the evangelist must become synonymous with integrity," Drace said. "We must develop more positive public exposure for evangelism. It's going to take work, but it'll be worth it in the end."

COSBE vice president Mike Osborne agreed. "It's a new day for evangelists. For most of our current COSBE members, the covenant is not a departure from anything they're doing. They have made themselves accountable, but this reaffirms to pastors and laypeople that we want to be a part of what God is doing."

"We want to be people who God can use," said Osborne, founder of MJO Ministries in Petersburg, Va.

"Most people think evangelists are undisciplined, that they preach the same five sermons all their lives," Drace said. But, in reality, many full-time evangelists now hold postgraduate and seminary degrees in family ministry, crusade ministry and other specialties. Drace, for example, holds a doctoral degree from California's Golden Gate Seminary. "It's just one more way to show that the call to be an evangelist is as important and as high and holy as the call to be a pastor or a missionary."

The seriousness of the calling is some-

thing Drace is working to impress on young men and women interested in evangelism ministry. "I always say, 'Don't do this unless God calls you, and then, if you do, limit yourself. Don't try to be all things to all people. Cultivate your family time. Choose when you travel.' Even Billy Graham has said he wished he had done that when he first started out."

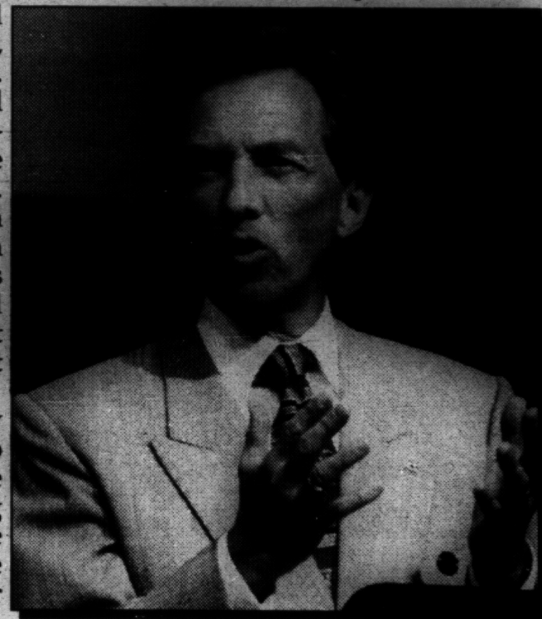
Drace recently mailed letters to all DOMs in the SBC challenging them to organize an area crusade in 1999, 2000 or 2001. "The old-time crusade is still effective, if done properly," Drace said. "We must commit the time and money necessary to pray for the crusade, rent good facilities and do the proper planning."

While supporting SBC events and activities, Drace also wants to involve COSBE members in evangelistic ministries outside traditional Southern Baptist life. "I call it coloring outside the lines," he said.

He's already picked up his crayons. Several weeks ago, the first-ever summit meeting with Southern Baptist evangelists, NAMB staff members and Focus on the Family staff took place at Focus' headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The purpose of the summit was to strengthen the awareness of evangelists and NAMB leaders of vital issues facing the American family.

"We Baptists used to think that if we didn't do things, they wouldn't get done, but in reality, God is doing wonderful things all over our world," Drace said.



Drace

## Miss. Baptist evangelists available to serve churches

### MUSIC

Alan Celoria Family  
Smithdale  
(601) 567-2393

Ronnie Cottingham, Agricola  
(601) 947-2460  
Ch: (601) 947-2460

Barrows Family, Lucedale  
(601) 947-9986  
Ch: (601) 588-6245

Myrna Hedgepeth  
Jackson  
(601) 956-3589  
Ch: (601) 956-5000

Brad Jones Family  
Meridian  
(601) 482-7798  
Ch: (800) 854-5917

Jimmy Knight  
Laurel  
(601) 428-1366  
Ch: (601) 428-0416

Johnnie Masters, Jr  
Pheba  
(601) 494-2377  
Ch: (601) 494-2377

R.L. & Beth Sigrest  
Yazoo City  
(601) 746-5988

Gerald & Cindy Simmons  
Long Beach  
(228) 863-1692

Joe Styron  
Kilmichael  
(601) 262-7360  
Ch: (601) 262-5507

Boyd Tweety  
Petal  
(601) 583-8309  
Ch: (601) 583-8309

John Wells  
Crystal Springs  
(601) 892-0177  
Ch: (601) 892-1149

### PREACHING

Victor Ainsworth, Gulfport  
(228) 832-6998  
Ch: (601) 832-6519

Michael Ray Alexander  
Jayess  
(601) 833-3053  
Ch: (601) 833-3053

Gary Bowlin, Brandon  
(601) 825-1043  
Ch: (601) 371-9161

Chester Estes, Union  
(601) 774-8324  
CH: (601) 774-8144

Desi Ginn, Southaven  
(601) 781-9670  
Ch: (601) 393-2445

Donnie Guy, Gulfport  
(228) 863-4897  
Ch: (334) 661-0114

Gary Jackson, Sturgis  
(601) 465-9966

Tony Monk  
Vicksburg  
(601) 636-2288  
Ch: (601) 636-2238

Billy Smith  
Madison  
(601) 853-0702  
O: (601) 853-1090

Jerry W. Smith  
Water Valley  
(601) 983-3623  
Ch: (601) 473-2399

Charles E. Smith Jr  
Booneville  
(601) 395-2254  
Ch: (601) 624-6153

Steve Walker, Pinola  
(601) 847-4375  
Ch: (601) 847-6652

John D. Wilton  
Long Beach  
(228) 864-8213  
Ch: (228) 864-2584

### PREACHING/MUSIC

Danny Lanier, Little Rock  
(601) 986-8757  
Ch: (601) 482-3498

### YOUTH P/M

Heith Wilkinson  
Yazoo City  
(601) 746-9677

### VENTRILOQUIST

John Yates  
Clinton  
(601) 924-4395  
Ch: (601) 924-9912

Source: MBCB Evangelism Dept.

## Annuity Bd. offers support guidebook

DALLAS (BP) — The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is offering churches assistance in planning financial support for pastors and staff members.

A 24-page booklet, titled "Planning Financial Support," is available in English and Spanish and is offered free of charge in quantity to meet the needs of any size church.

In workbook form, it leads a church committee to determine pay arrangements for every church employee. The five-step process includes: determining needs, consideration of a method for paying ministry expenses, establishing a benefits plan, setting personal income and completing a financial support worksheet that can easily transfer to the church's annual budget document.

"Planning Financial Support" and other resources can be ordered by calling the Annuity Board's toll-free number (800) 262-0511, and pressing 1 to reach a customer relations specialist. The text of the booklet is also found on the Annuity Board's Internet home page on the World Wide Web at [www.absbc.org](http://www.absbc.org).



# Mississippian has ministry of 'little things'



**SERVING WITH JOY** — Mississippi missionary Martha Beal (right) enjoys time alone with her husband, Richard, as they stand on the terrace of the "Dios Es Amor" (God is Love) Baptist Church where they are members in the town of El Hatillo, near Caracas, Venezuela. (IMB photo by Betty Poor)

**CARACAS, Venezuela** — Missionary Martha Beal has a wonderful ministry of "little things" in Caracas, Venezuela.

Born in Laurel she grew up in Natchez. "I felt I'd be willing to be a missionary, but didn't think the Lord could use me," she said. "I have no outstanding talent. I do a little of a lot of things."

Martha and her husband Richard are Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries. One of Martha's chief assignments is that of mission office bookkeeper and English language secretary. She is also resource coordinator for the Venezuelan support team. This includes working with missionary children and serving as press representative.

"Everywhere we've lived we've been involved with church planting, although that's not our assignment," she said. The couple has been working in a young church in El Hatillo for six years.

Martha teaches school-age children in Sunday School at El Hatillo and plays the piano for the church. "I'm teaching piano to five people, and one of them is the pastor," she said.

In El Hatillo, Martha has taught various classes as a means of outreach. "I've taught cake decorating, typing, cross-stitch and English as a second language," she said. "All the courses include a devotional or Bible study."

Now Richard and Martha are also serving on the Caracas university team, targeting university students.

Earlier in her missionary career Martha also home schooled the Beals' two daughters, Sarah and Susan. "I really enjoyed that," she said.

Richard and Martha have provided a Christian home for their children in Venezuela like she remembers from her childhood in Mississippi.

"From my earliest memory we had a family altar," she said. "We read the missionary calendar and 'Open Windows,' and I went to GAs (Girls in Action)." She remembers going to Camp Garaywa in Clinton.

When Martha was nine the girl next door made a profession of faith. "That got me to thinking about it," she said. She talked to Wayne Coleman, her pastor at First Church, Natchez, about her own need for Christ. She then made a public decision and was baptized.

Martha majored in business education and received a bachelor of science degree from Mississippi College in Clinton.

Before she and Richard became engaged they shared with each other that they were willing to go as missionaries, but they didn't feel called.

After their marriage, while Rich was studying at Southwestern Seminary, Martha had a brief visit with

Major McDaniel, who was a missionary to Korea. He had been minister of music in her church in Natchez. He asked her if she and Rich were interested in missions. She told him they didn't feel called. "We thought we were not qualified, and we were not willing to leave older parents."

As they studied the Scriptures, the Lord assured them he would take care of their parents. Then they heard a missionary from Africa talk about the importance of "little things" put to use in God's service. Thus reassured, the Beals began the appointment process.

"Once we got started we never felt any hesitation about it," Martha said. They were appointed for Venezuela in 1978.

The Beals will be returning to Mississippi on May 1, 1999, for a year's furlough. They will be living in a missionary home in Columbia.



## YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## REVIVAL RESULTS

**Tishomingo, Tishomingo:** three made professions of faith; six men and women, along with their families, have joined the church; during a parent-child dedication service on Nov. 8, Jim Pinkerton, pastor, led the parents of 23 children (age 4 months to 4 years), to dedicate themselves to raising these children, and their older siblings, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

## VINYL SIDING

NO DOWN PAYMENT - 100% FINANCING  
**SAVE NOW**  
 • ROOFING  
 • ROOM ADDITION  
 • BATH-DEN  
 • KITCHEN  
 • CARPORT  
 as low as **\$50** Per Mo. W.A.C.  
 CALL 1-888-373-0054  
 PAY-less Home Improvements

IT ALL BEGAN IN  
 THE MANGER  
 OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO.  
 TODAY, THE PROPHECIES  
 CONTINUE TO UNFOLD...

HOW MANY ON YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST WILL GET LEFT BEHIND?

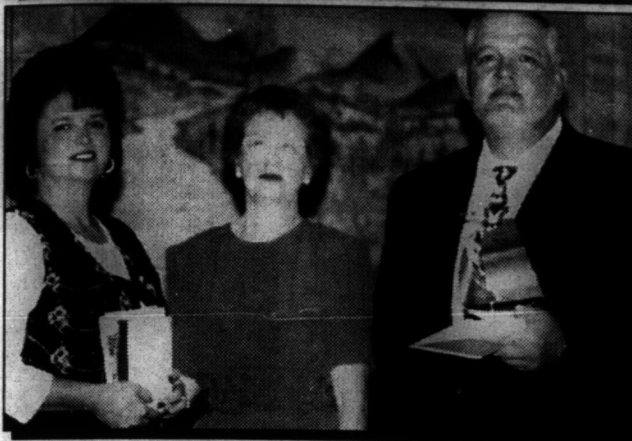
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON  
 THE FUTURE IS CLEAR

1999

leifbeninc.com



## NAMES IN THE NEWS



P. Boyles, Chambers, D. Boyles

In recognition of Pastor Appreciation Month, the members of Homewood Church, Homewood, honored its pastor Doyle Boyles and his wife Pat. Pictured (from left) are Pat Boyles; Betty Chambers, who presented gifts; and Doyle Boyles.

John Edward Yates was ordained to the ministry at First Church, Yazoo City, on Nov. 15. A native of Paragould, Ark., Yates moved to Yazoo City in 1961. He is a graduate of Delta State

University. Upon graduation from college he served two Mississippi churches as minister of music and youth before entering the field of music evangelism and Christian entertainment in 1986. Yates is married to

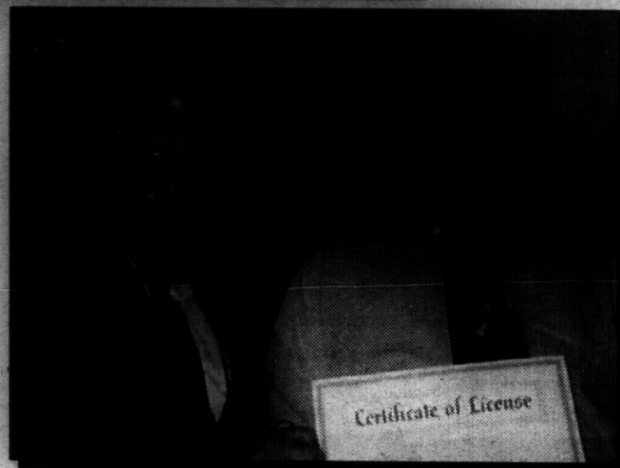
Patty Shurley, also of Yazoo City. His father, James F. Yates, pastor emeritus of First Church, Yazoo City, preached the ordination sermon. Pictured (from left) are James Yates; John Yates; and David Raddin, pastor.

Bruce Graves, youth and children's director at Mt. Zion Church, Osyka, was licensed to the ministry on Oct. 4. Pictured with Graves (right) is Earl Warren Jr., pastor of Mt. Zion Church.

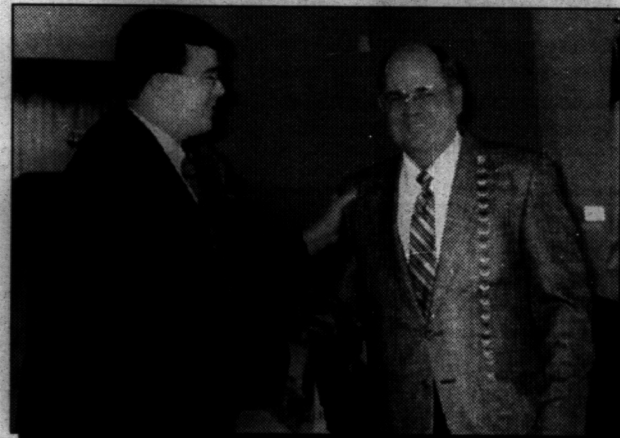


J. F. Yates, J. Yates, Raddin education.

Salem Church, Toomsoba, recently recognized John Johnson for 38 years of perfect attendance in Sunday School. Pictured are Johnson (right) and Reid Vaughan, minister of music and



Warren and Graves



Vaughan and Johnson

## BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS



Larry Kennedy, president, William Carey College; Norma J. Sullivan; and Milfred Valentine, dean of the Winters School of Music; are pictured (from left) at a reception held in Sullivan's honor. A Boston baby grand piano was purchased for the college through the generous contributions of Sullivan, the Allegrezza Piano Company, and others.

Van N. Oliphant, longtime administrator at the University of Memphis, assumed the position of executive vice president and provost at William Carey College recently. Oliphant holds the doctor of business administration degree from Mississippi State University.

The first book in English detailing Charles Amable Battaille's vocal scientific research and teaching methods has been published. The author is James Richard Joiner, a professor of voice and choral music and the Chair of the Department of Music at Mississippi College. Joiner's book is an essential addition to the literature of vocal science and vocal pedagogy and is intended to be a resource for singing teachers, students, and scholars in the field.

Mississippi Nurses Association (MNA) has named Grace Clark, associate professor and a registered nurse, as Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse of the Year. MNA is the professional nursing organization for registered nurses in Mississippi. Clark received her BSN from the University of Wisconsin, MA in nursing from the University of Iowa, and DSN in Community Mental Health Nursing from the University of Alabama.

Mississippi College, through the Office of Continuing Education, is offering the Senior Adult Education Program for the Spring semester. The Program allows senior adults (age 55 or above) to register and attend selected academic courses. The participant can listen, take notes, and experience the college environment while being exempt from test, grades, and attendance requirements. The cost is \$50. The deadline is Jan. 4. Interested applicants should contact the Office of Continuing Education, or call Ken Gilliam at (601) 925-3263 for more information.

## LMCO goal surpassed

The Lottie Moon International Mission Goal for Pheba Church, Golden Triangle Association, was \$2,500. "Using the theme, 'All the Way in One Day,' resulted in a total offering of \$3,321.06," said Charles Dampeer, interim pastor.

## GA/ACTEENS CAMPUS DAYS

William Carey College

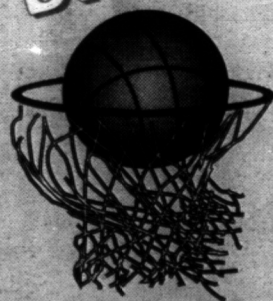
January 16, 1999

2:00 - 7:00 pm

\$7.50 each

(Deadline to register is Jan. 11)

- ✕ Missionaries
- ✕ Basketball
- ✕ Testimonies
- ✕ Cheerleaders
- ✕ Music



Mississippi College

February 20, 1999

9:30am - 3:00 p.m.

\$7.50 each

(Deadline to register is Feb. 15)

Please send number of participants, check, and college attending to:

WMU, PO Box 530, JACKSON, MS 39205-0530

or call 1-800-748-1651 for more details.

**LITTLE GIANT MFG. CO.**  
BAPTISTRIES  
WATER HEATERS  
STEEPLES  
CROSSES  
www.little-giant.com  
TOLL FREE 1-800-231-6035



William Carey College Theater Department recently presented "Alice in Wonderland" in the O. L. Quave Theatre on the Hattiesburg campus. Pictured (from left) are The Mad Hatter (Joseph Brack, Whitman, Mass.); Dormouse (Charlie Wallace, Hattiesburg); and the March Hare (Tony Bullock, Picayune).



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



Former/present pastors, Temple Church



Former/present youth min., Temple Church



Charter members, Temple Church

**Temple Church, Union County**, celebrated its 50th anniversary on Oct. 11. Former and present pastors attending (pictured) are Danny Bryant, Robert Walker, Griff Walker, pastor, and Tracy Putnam. Former youth ministers (pictured) are Chris Twilley, Bobby Butler, Ron Simpson, and David Campbell. Charter members (front row, from left) are Trey Gresham, Beatrice Gresham, Gladys Davis, Peggy Cook; second row, Lucille Billings, Bob Lindsey, and Boyce Gresham.

**The Women's Ministry of**

**First Church, Grenada**, will present "Jesus, Name Above All Names," a seminar for women on Jan. 23 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. The guest speaker will be Jan Hoobay. For more information, call the church at (601) 226-3661.

**Calvary Church, Oak Grove**, will have worship services at 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 20 in its new 700 seat sanctuary. The opening day service will also include a worship musical "My Utmost for His Highest" performed by the music and drama ministries of Calvary Church at 6 p.m. John Voss is pastor. For additional information, call the church at (601) 264-7338.

**Country Woods Church, Byram**, recently held its fall festival entitled "God's Great Adventures." Over 300 people were in attendance.

**First Church, Chicora**, recently recognized its Royal Ambassadors (RAs) with the presentation of the Royal Ambassador pin. Waynon Harris and Kenneth Pope, leaders, were also recognized. Fifteen RAs attended the state rally at Mississippi College this year. David Roberson is pastor.



Campers on Mission recently held a South Rally at Boones Camp near Columbia. Previous to the rally, some of the group conducted revival services at Hebron Church near McComb.



Ground breaking at Homewood Church, Homewood

A ground breaking ceremony for the construction of a new

sanctuary was recently held at Homewood Church, Homewood. Pictured (from left) are James Shoemaker; John Harrison; Doyle Boyles, pastor; Randy Harrison; Roland Harris; and Ronald Chambers.

## STAFF CHANGES

**Alta Woods Church, Jackson**, has called **Mike Patton** of Boaz, Ala., as minister of education effective Dec. 14. He received his education at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., and New Orleans Seminary.

**Charles (Chuck) Pittman Jr.**, has recently accepted a call to Hopewell Church, Tuscaloosa, Ala., as minister of music and education. He goes to Tuscaloosa from Shreveport, La. Pittman served at First Church, Terry, for three years before moving to Louisiana. A native of Canton, Pittman received his education at Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary.



Pittman

**Randall Jackson** has accepted the call to pastor Leesburg Church, Rankin County, effective Dec. 13. He previously served at Tangipahoa Church, Pike County. A native of Sturgis, Jackson is a graduate of Mississippi State University and New Orleans Seminary.



Jackson

**Trinity Church, Laurel**, has called **Jimmy D. Dobson** as pastor effective Dec. 13. A native of Ellisville, Dobson received his education at the University of Southern Mississippi and New Orleans Seminary. His previous place of service was First Church, Vivian, La.

**Kilmichael Church, Kilmichael**, has called **David Bishop** as pastor. Bishop previously served at Siloam Church, West Point.



Bishop

**Gore Springs Church, Gore Springs**, has called **Jeff Howell** as pastor effective Nov. 1. He is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary and has pastored churches in Holmes and Calhoun counties. He previously served Second Church, Calhoun City.



Howell

**Newhebron Church, Newhebron**, has called **David Wilkinson** as pastor effective Dec. 1. A native of Meridian, Wilkinson received his education at Mississippi State University and New Orleans Seminary. His previous place of service was First Church, Lacey, Washington.

Pews, pulpits, baptistries, stained glass, carpet, steeples, lighting, folding doors, theater seats.

**Van Winkle Church Furnishings & Pew Upholstery**

Box 501, Fulton, MS 38843  
In MS. Toll Free 1-800-624-9627

### MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**FUEL-TIME PASTOR:** Shady Grove Baptist Church is seeking God's direction for a full-time pastor. Send resumes to 3166 Deer Creek Rd, Batesville, MS 38606.

**FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Wade Baptist Church in Wade, MS is searching for a full-time minister of music. Please forward resume to the following address: Music Search Committee, c/o Don Miller, Chariman, 2716 Dogwood Lane, Pascagoula, MS 39581.

**PIANIST:** Send resume to Kreole Avenue Baptist Church, 4124 Kreole Ave., Moss Point, MS 39563 or call 228-475-1306.

### CLASSIFIED ADS

RATE: 50 cents per word, \$5 minimum. Cash with order except on contract advertising. Include name, address, zip code, and phone number in word count. No blind ads. ONLY WRITTEN ADS ACCEPTED.

**RODGERS ORGANS:** Sales and Service. (504) 524-1216.

**CFI — PEWS, NEW & used.** Baptistries, steeples, & stained glass, MS & ALA. 1-800-830-0583

**PASSENGER VANS FOR private and church groups.** From \$59.95 per day/ limited free miles/7 to 15-seat. Occasionally for sale: quality used vans. Auto & Truck Rental, Jackson (601) 948-3391. Since 1965.

**FOR SALE:** 1997 Ford Clubwagon XLT 15 passenger van, dual air and more, great condition. Call 939-1229 W, 824-1479 H \$18,500.

**ATTENTION:** committed couples to work

full-time with "at-risk" children in residential setting. Opportunities throughout Alabama. Minimum HS diploma. Benefits include BC/BS PMD, TDA, life insurance, sick leave, vacation, living expenses. Call 1-800-548-4256 or write to Box 240009 Montgomery, AL 36124-0009.

**PARADISE LANES:** Mississippi's only smoke and alcohol free Bowling Center. Call about Lock-in, group rates, fund raisers, and leagues. Located at 820 Cooper Road, Jackson, MS (601) 372-7700.

**HEIDELBERG STAINED GLASS,** Meridian. Design, Fabrication, Repair. Fax illustrations to (601) 483-7958 or call 1-800-368-2705.

## Get your gear for VBS '99!



Everything you need is here, all in one backpack. It's the **VBS Summit Sampler** with good stuff to help your group climb Mt. Extreme. Get your sampler today.

**LifeWay**

Over 80 Stores  
Nationwide  
Call 1-800-233-1123  
Jackson: 601-977-9676



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



**Branch Church, Morton**, held a recognition service on Oct. 4 to honor its Acteens for their achievements in Studiact. Pictured (from left) are Candace Merchant, queen; Jamie Irby, queen with a scepter; and Ashley Bates and Janice McCullough, queen regents. Sandra Measles is Acteens advisor, Alice Drury is WMU director, and James Watts is pastor.

**Enon Church, Grenada**, will host its 4th annual live nativity scene from 5-8 p.m. on Dec. 21-23.

The sanctuary choir of

**Woodville Heights Church, Jackson**, will present a Christmas musical entitled "Mary, Did You Know?" at 6 p.m. on Dec. 20. For more information, call the church at (601) 372-5443.

**Elmo Church, near Fayette**, held special dedication services for a new worship facility on Sept. 27. The new facility includes a 150-seat sanctuary, new furnishings, donated organ, four classrooms, baptistry, church office, and pastor's study. Corky Evans, pastor, led in the dedication services. Dale Little, director of missions for Adams-Union Association, preached the message in the morning service. Music was provided by Lake St. John Community Church of Ferriday, La., and Elmo choir. Matt Buckles, consultant in the Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and former member, preached the dedication message at the 1:30 p.m. service. The facility was constructed debt-free at an approximate cost of \$120,000. David Cooper served as chairman of the building committee. The church conducted its last Homecoming Day on March 8 in the original facility. Elmo Church was organized



Members of Elmo Church, Fayette

in December 1915 at the Prather Crossroads. Land for the church was given by John Prather whose great great grandson is David Cooper, building committee chairman. Pictured (from left) are Ken Anderson, former pastor; Little; Buckles; Kermit Grammar, Wesson; Evans; Jack Harrigill, Harvey Prather Jr., and Alan Freeman, deacons; Billy Cooper, former pastor.



**Big Level Church, Wiggins**, held a ground breaking ceremony on Aug. 23. The new building will include a worship center and educational space. Pictured (from left) are Larry O'Neal, treasurer; Kent Hatten, chairman of the building committee; Lavell Bond, chairman of the finance committee; R. L. Stewart, chairman of deacons; and David Perry, pastor.

B E E S O N D I V I N I T Y S C H O O L

## Being spiritually formed for a Perilous Ministry

SOME TIME AGO, I heard about an ordination service where the two preachers presented contrasting views of the ministry. The first preacher was jovial, *bon vivant*, and he encouraged the young minister to lay aside all fears and plunge forward into his new career with gusto. He contended: "Ministry is a skill to be learned, a technique to be mastered." The other preacher was an older pastor, and he shocked the congregation by what he said. To the young ordinand, he shared one single verse from the Bible: "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"



Timothy George

The old pastor was right. The ministry is a perilous business. "Nothing is so deadening to the divine," George MacDonald wrote, "as an habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things." Because ministers of the Gospel regularly traffic in matters of eternal moment—birth and death, baptism and marriage, Word and sacrament—it is easy to cultivate a "professional" persona without being grasped by the awesome realities we are called to mediate.

Martin Luther set forth a three-fold pattern of spiritual formation that applies to all Christians. *Oratio* (prayer). *Meditatio* (meditation). *Tentatio* (trial).

**ORATIO.** Faithful, persistent prayer is the basis of all theological work and the heartbeat of every vital ministry. The pastor's study should have at least two open windows: One facing out toward the

world, the world of suffering and sin for which Christ died; the other a skylight open toward heaven, toward the One in whose Name we serve.

**MEDITATIO.** As ministers of the divine Word, we are called to a life of meditation. This means that the Holy Scriptures must become more than a sourcebook of sermons or a collection of ancient documents to be studied historically and critically. We meditate on the Bible in the company of the people of God through the ages, gleaning wisdom from all the saints.

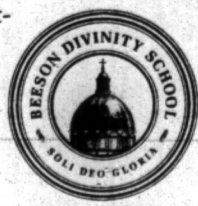
**TENTATIO.** Luther did not learn this third mark all at once, he says, but followed where trials and temptations led. Sometimes we struggle for our footing in the awful swellings of the Jordan, but we do so in the confidence that through such testing we are being called to know how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting is God's Word, wisdom above all wisdom.

**AT BEESON**, we know that pastors cannot lead others to the deep streams of God's grace unless they are regularly refreshed there themselves. Our entire curriculum seeks to encourage our students to know God's Word deeply in both their heads and their hearts.

To this kind of spiritual formation we are called—in the care and cure of souls entrusted to us by the Church of Jesus Christ: *Solo Deo Gloria!*

Timothy George

Dean



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY  
Birmingham, Alabama  
<http://beeson.samford.edu>

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT BEESON DIVINITY SCHOOL, CALL 1-800-888-8266

Beeson is affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals and is accredited by The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Samford University is an Equal Opportunity Institution and welcomes applications for employment and educational programs from all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, disability, or national or ethnic origin.

## Patterson Place piano special

The plaque on the new piano in the meeting room at Patterson Place at Camp Garaywa will read something like, "In honor of Auntie, with love from Dave and Doug."

The two nephews might wish the space would allow them to mention many ways Auntie made their lives happier and richer — ways far beyond

the live of auntly duties. Included in those ways would be that she influenced them toward missions responsibilities as they were growing up.

"Auntie" to Dave and Doug is Marjean Patterson, former executive director of Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union and lodge namesake.

Perhaps there is a special someone like that in your life whom you would like to honor with a special gift for Patterson Place. Contact Joan Tyler at P.O. Box 425, Collins, MS 39428. Phone (601) 765-8831.

Pray that Patterson Place will be debt-free at dedication on March 15, 1998.

**Custom Church Interiors, Inc.**  
**PEWS**  
Pew Refinishing & Reupholstering  
Stain Glass • Carpet • Lights  
Painting • Baptisries • Steeples  
Complete Renovations  
**1-800-654-1294**  
Jackson, MS 601-957-8844



New and Used Buses in stock  
Available in 12 to 43 passengers

### Church Buses

- We buy used buses
- Guaranteed buy-back program

**Carpenter Bus Sales, Inc.**  
Brentwood, Tenn.

1-(800)-370-6180

1-(615)-376-2287

[www.carpenterbus.com](http://www.carpenterbus.com)

SINCE 1953



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### The act of Christmas

Luke 2:1-40

By Dee McDermitt

From heaven's perspective it seemed darkness had ruled on earth forever. When the angels looked over the banisters and down into the dark, they wondered how long.

Then a tiny glimmer of light appeared in the darkness. Heaven held its breath in joyful expectation. At the word of the Father, it shone brighter and brighter. The light of hope had come! It filled the whole earth and the darkness retreated. All of heaven rejoiced!

The words that had been spoken had come to life and were being manifested on the earth. The Father was acting on his promises at last!

From earth's perspective things weren't so simple. Many did not know that hope had come. Concealed in the constraints of earth's limitations, hope had become flesh and must live and grow and be revealed in the fullness of time.

**Humble Hope (2:7).** For thousands of years, the words had been spoken by the prophets. In the darkest hour, a young girl was visited by an angel who told her she would bear a child who would be called the Son of the Most High. She responded in complete obedience and hope was deposited in her womb.

Her fiancée became aware that



McDermitt

she was pregnant and planned to quietly break off all ties. But an angel visited him in a dream and assured him that all was well. He accepted her and together they awaited the arrival of hope in the flesh. Their thoughts must have turned again and again to the miracle Mary was carrying.

Then in the fullness of time in humble circumstances, hope in the form of a baby was delivered to them. They wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a place where animals fed.

The lodging places in Bethlehem that night were all full because, at the command of the governor, many had traveled to the town to register. While people slept in warm beds, the breath of animals warmed the baby lying in the hay.

**Inclusive hope (2:8-14).** Hope had arrived and it was announced, not in engraved invi-

tations sent to the most influential and prestigious of the world, but by angels to lowly shepherds on a hillside in the dark.

Shepherds were a despised and rejected lot. The outcasts of this world were chosen to be the first to hear the good news. Who do you look upon as outcast and rejected in your world today? This wonderful news of hope is for them, too. God's acceptance crosses all boundaries just as he crossed the boundary of heaven and earth to take on the form of a human so that hope could be extended to all.

**Energizing hope (2:16-17, 20).** Hope is not passive. It gives birth to action. The shepherds' hearts burned with the excitement and glory of the event they had just witnessed. The initial fear they felt had vanished and the scriptures say they ran to Bethlehem to find the child.

Upon finding Mary, Joseph, and the Christ-child, they went out announcing it to everyone

they encountered so that many people heard of his birth. As they went back to their sheepfold, they couldn't stop praising God for what they had experienced.

**Nurtured hope (2:21, 39-40).** After the birth, Mary and Joseph settled down to the routine of life, raising and nurturing the child they had been given. It is evident that their faith was an important priority in their lives since they are credited with "performing all things according to the law of the Lord."

They observed the important Jewish rituals of circumcision, naming of the child, presenting him to the Lord in Jerusalem, and offering a sacrifice.

After the family's return to Galilee, Jesus grew both physically and spiritually under Mary and Joseph's careful keeping. Hope was alive and growing and would soon be revealed.

McDermitt is a member of Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg.

## FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

### What's Christmas all about?

Luke 2:1-17

By Carl M. White

There are many great stories from the annals of human history, but they all pale in significance to the Christmas story. This story deserves to be heard year after year. It is the ultimate salvation epic. A loving God became one of us, in order that he might redeem us through the power of his death and resurrection. This wonderful story starts in an insignificant village in a forgotten corner of the world.

**Humble birth (vv. 1-7).** The glitter and glamour of our modern Christmas celebration sometimes serves to obscure the reality of the how this story begins. A pastor friend of mine collects manger scenes. He has

dozens of them, from polished marble to rough, hand carved wood. Yet, even the most humble of them fails to capture the true humility of the circumstances surrounding his birth.

The great 20th century Christian thinker C. S. Lewis observed that the whole Christmas story focuses down to a single point as sharp as the tip of a Roman spear — a poor, young Jewish girl having her prayers. Had Mary not been willing to believe the unbelievable, Christmas may have never come.

Many focus on the difficulty of the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. However, because the shadow of scandal fell over



White

this pregnancy, the decree to go register for taxation may have been a relief for Mary. It took her away from the accusing eyes of relatives and neighbors who knew how to count the weeks and months. It dawned on me one day as I studied a pretty manger scene what was

missing from this picture: grandparents! Mary and Joseph were alone, in a strange town, among strangers, when Jesus was born. Because they both believed and were obedient to God, they were taken away from the warm hearth of family and friends to a cold and isolated stable in a far away village.

How many missionary families do we have who are far away from the warm hearth of family and friends in a cold and isolated corner of the world, just because they believed and were obedient to God?

**Startling announcement (vv. 8-14).** I have often wondered who was more surprised at the news, the angels or the shepherds? The shepherds were naturally startled by the appearance of angels. It was hardly a common occurrence. It is doubtful, however, that they ever fully understood the significance of the announcement. We have the benefit of 2000 years of history when we read the birth story. To them, it just happened one starry night.

The angels are another story. They were in heaven, around the presence of God himself. They were undoubtedly startled by the reality that God choose to come to earth in a stable, born to poor peasant people, rather than to a palace and the family of royalty. Yet, they understood its significance and celebrated accordingly.

With the benefit of history on our side, we too can understand the significance of his birth and

should celebrate accordingly. A savior was born. Humanity was like the suffering people of Europe who celebrated the coming of D Day. The long-awaited assault on sin and death was begun that first Christmas.

**Personal response (vv. 15-17).** The shepherds made a fateful decision that first Christmas. Rather than staying where they were and following the usual routine of life, they decided to go and see for themselves what the angels were celebrating. If they had not, we may have never known about them. It makes a difference whether or not you respond to the one in the manger.

This Christmas, go again, or go for the first time, to the manger and see the Christ child. Ponder the wonder and the significance of his coming. When by faith people respond to him, it forever changes their lives.

White is a member of First Church, Clinton.

## LIFE AND WORK

### The gift of Jesus

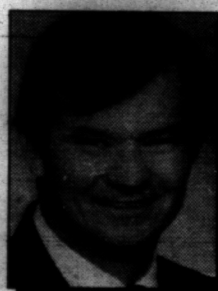
Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:18-23; 2:1-2, 9-11

By Hugh Plunkett

Most of us fit into one of three categories; the "got it done" group; the "got some or most of it done" group; or the "oh my goodness, what am I going to do" group. Buying and giving Christmas presents will occupy our minds for at least four more days. Economists say that this year we will invest nearly two billion dollars in Christmas savings, spend almost five hundred million on trees and decorations, and three hundred million on turkeys. You can add another sixteen million for plum pudding. The Treasury Department will put more than a billion dollars in circulation just for the demands of the season. Are we missing the point of Christmas?

Gift giving is a central part of Christmas celebrations, yet many of us need to be reminded that Christmas is a celebration of a gift that has been already given.

**The promise of the gift (Isa. 9:6-7).** The prophet, Isaiah declares that a child would be born who would be the Messiah. He would be called Emmanuel, meaning, "God with us." He would rule a kingdom that would have no end of peace and prosperity. It is little wonder that the Jews anticipated the birth of the Messiah. They longed for him. However, as the years past and no Messiah surfaced, the people's enthusiasm waned. They thought they knew what



Plunkett

they wanted, but God knew what his people needed. The description of God's promised ruler should make us all aware of the enormity and significance of his gift to us.

**The arrival of the gift (Matt. 1:18-23).** Did you ever wonder why God allowed the birth of his Son to be so difficult? First of all,

the baby was to be born to a virgin. God had to know all the questions that this would raise. Why the long trip to Bethlehem? What about the accommodations? Surely God wanted his Son to have the best of care and facilities. As the saying goes, "a thousand times in history a baby has become a king... but only once did a king become a baby." Yet, there were no royal attendants, only shepherds and farm animals to welcome the new baby. It doesn't seem like God was concerned with these details. God's promise through Isaiah was ful-

filled with the birth of Jesus to Mary. This fulfillment should cause us to trust God's promises in his Word. I'm reminded of the story of the little boy who got a St. Bernard for Christmas. As he looked at his present with excited but timid eyes, he gasped, "Wow, that's great! But, is he mine, or am I his?" That may be the biggest question in your life this holiday season.

**Our response to the gift (Matt. 2:1-2, 9-11).** Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem seeking the child, having followed the star. They sought to worship him as king. Wise men still seek Jesus today.

Children play the game of hide and seek, but for those of us who are earnest in finding Jesus, it is seek and seek. Jesus seeks us out while we are sinners (Luke 19:10) and he rewards those who diligently seek him with the gift of salvation. (Heb. 11:6) The gift of Jesus should compel us to bow down and worship him as

the wise men did.

During the second world war, all across America banners with blue stars were hung in the windows of homes representing sons in the service. A gold star meant the son was not coming home. One Christmas eve a boy and his father were walking down the street talking about the banners with the stars. When they came to an empty lot, the son noticed in the sky one evening star shining brightly. "Look Dad," he said, "there is one star in God's window. That means God gave a son, too." Then he noticed that it was a gold star and he added, "That means, he died."

Almighty God became one of us that night so long ago. He lived among us, suffered temptations as we do and was crucified for us on a Roman cross. Without that baby, there is no cross, and without the cross, there is no crown.

Plunkett is minister of music and adults at Clarksdale Church.



## LIFE AND WORK

### The gift of a new start

Philippians 3:13-14; Philemon 10-21

By Hugh Plunkett

The beginning of a new year leads many to make resolutions. A fresh start is compelling, but many people do not know how to start anew. While some self-improvement resolutions are good, we need to find our new start in a renewed daily walk with Christ. As we follow him, he leads us to serve him and helps us in our quest for a new start in life.

**Let go of the past (Phil. 3:13).** Paul did not consider himself to be perfect, but he chose to forget his past and move forward. He knew the secret of success: learn from your mistakes. Don't let past failures paralyze your future

endeavors.

Thomas Edison, while trying over 1500 different materials for the filament in his electric light bulb, commented, "These are not failures for now I know what will work." He knew the value of persistence. There are others. Robin Williams was elected "Least Likely to Succeed," in his high school. Famous chef Julia Child, could barely cook until she was 34 years old. Baseball legend Willie Mays didn't get a hit his first 25 at bats. Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before he finally succeeded. Do not let your past deter you in attempting great things for Christ.



Plunkett

**Focus on the goal (Phil. 3:14).** Paul knew that God had called him in Christ and Paul pressed on to the goal and reward that awaited him. Say what you will, each of us needs a goal in life. Without a goal, it is hard to tell when you are finished. One of my senior adults counted the days

until he could retire. When the time finally came, he thoroughly enjoyed his new life, for about three days. It wasn't long before I learned he had returned to work. When I asked why he said, "I discovered that a man has to have something to get up for each morning."

Have you ever noticed that you cannot focus on a goal while looking at the past? That's like trying to drive a car while looking forward and backward at the same time. It isn't possible and it surely is frustrating. For a Christian to move forward, setting goals is important. Believers

should seek to fulfill the goals that God sets for them.

**Change your perspective (Philem. 10-21).** Paul appealed to Philemon to change his perspective and attitude about his slave, Onesimus. Paul wanted Philemon to make a new start and accept Onesimus as a brother and a partner in the Lord's work, no longer as a slave. In setting goals for ourselves in service to Christ, we need to understand the importance of perspective. Simply defined, perspective is the relationship of the parts of the whole, regarded from a particular standpoint or point in time. Most of the time we do not look upon things from God's perspective. As humans, we think on human terms. God declares, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways." (Is. 55:8) Many times we do not attempt things because they appear to be impossible. We forget, "What is impossible with man is possible

with God." (Matt. 19:26)

Paul realized that he did not possess the omnipotence or the omniscience of his Heavenly Father. He knew his perspective was vastly inferior to the perspective of Almighty God. Recognizing his weakness, Paul prefaced his faith by declaring in Phil. 3:12, "I have not obtained all this, nor am I perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Dan Burgess summed up this thought when he penned these words:

"In Jesus' name we press on,  
In Jesus' name we press on;  
Dear Lord, with the prize  
Clear before our eyes,  
We find the strength to press on."

May we, like Paul, recognize our imperfections, forget our past, and press on to the goal that Christ is leading us to accomplish.

Plunkett is minister of music and adults at Clarksdale Church.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### People of action

Mark 3:13-4:34

By Dee McDermitt

The joy of being chosen — we've all felt it. In November my pastor asked me to organize the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. In the conversation, he said he was depending on me to handle it. It's something I enjoy and I felt honored to be chosen for the task. At the same time, I knew it would require work and sacrifice. My Christmas Eve will have been spent putting out luminaries, setting up the sanctuary and taking care of other details. Of course, this is small compared to the mission for which the first disciples were chosen.

In this lesson Mark tells us how Jesus chose the twelve

who he called apostles, describes an important characteristic of those who are called, and shows how he trained them to be people of action for God's kingdom.

**People of action receive God's call (3:13-15).** The first part of verse 13 says that Jesus went up into the hills. If Jesus was true to form, he was again praying for the Father's instructions before he called the twelve. The last part of the verse says that he called those he wanted. He already had a large following of disciples. From that group, he chose twelve men and designated them apostles.

We don't know why he

chose those twelve, but we do know that since he was God, he knew them "warts and all." Maybe he knew their hearts were tender to God's will and that they could be depended on to complete the task no matter how often they failed. At any rate, they knew the joy of being

chosen for the job.

The words "apostle" and "ambassador" both mean "sent out with a special mission." This designation carried with it two responsibilities. (1) They would give up their lives to be with Jesus. They would see, touch, taste and know his mission intimately. (2) They would preach and be empowered to drive out demons as Jesus had done.

**People of action do God's will (3:31-35).** In the verses preceding this section, Mark tells of the reaction of two groups, Jesus' family and the scribes, to

his ministry. His family said he is "beside himself" which puts one in mind of a split personality. The NIV uses "out of his mind." The scribes are not so kind. They accuse him of being in league with the devil.

Jesus explained to the scribes that Satan is too smart to come against him. He then issued a serious warning about the kind of unbelief they were exhibiting. They had seen him in action and could not deny he had power to do great things, but they repeatedly refused to believe that he was from God.

When his family came to take charge of him, his response indicated that real family is not necessarily earthly family, but spiritual family — the people who believe God and who do his will no matter what.

Jesus also pointed out an important characteristic of those who are chosen. Knowing alone is inadequate.

We must be people of action doing the will of God.

**People of action receive God's training (4:1-2a, 30-34).** Jesus taught the crowds kingdom principles using parables from daily life. Though they were elementary, the meaning was veiled even to the disciples.

Alone with the disciples, Mark says Jesus took time to teach and train them about all things. Jesus used parables because he knew the minds of men. This was a method of testing to separate the wheat from the chaff — to see who really desired to understand God's ways.

Those who had ears to hear and acted upon what they heard would have more capacity to understand. Those who did not would always misunderstand. Check of your own heart today. Do you have ears to hear?

McDermitt is a member of Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg.



McDermitt

## FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

### How real is Christ's presence?

Luke 24:36-53

By Carl M. White

In order for his presence to be real in our lives, our doubts and fears must be overcome. Because of his actions, they can be. The result is praise and worship in our lives.

**They were afraid (vv. 37).** It is natural to be fearful of things we don't understand. Thus, it is easy to understand the disciples' fear at his appearance. Wouldn't it be a shame, though, to let the fear of the unknown keep a person away from a wonderful experience? Where would humanity be today if the fear of the unknown had overcome Columbus, or Lewis and Clarke, or John Glenn?

If you are afraid of a deeply moving spiritual experience, that may be just enough to keep you from experiencing the greatest blessings of life. The disciples were afraid, but they did not let fear hinder them from approaching the resurrected Christ. Neither should you.

**They doubted (vv. 38).** The resurrection of Jesus Christ was so unbelievable and so marvelous, Jesus had to appear to his disciples repeatedly in order to overcome the natural human tendency toward skepticism.

Some truths are so remarkable God must go to great

lengths before people can truly get them. Consider for instance faith. Of all the biblical truths, faith is clearly defined (cf. Heb. 11:1) and overwhelmingly illustrated (cf. Heb. 11:2-40). It is as if this truth is so important and yet so simple, God had to bend over backwards to make it clear.

Everything about the resurrection went against human logic and experience. Jesus had to prove to them who he was, and that he was not just a spirit, but a resurrected person. Thus, he showed them his hands and feet. He allowed them to touch him, and he sat down in front of them and he ate. Ghosts don't eat!

**Jesus acted (vv. 40, 45, 50).** While the disciples were filled with doubt and fear, Jesus acted. Note the action of Christ

in verses 40, 45, and 50. He "showed them his hands and his feet," "opened their minds to understand the scriptures," and "lifted up his hands and he blessed them."

This is the story of humanity and of divinity. While mankind doubts and sins, God acts to redeem. While the first action — showing his hands and his feet — was a one time event for those who witnessed his death, his other actions are ongoing. Jesus still opens minds to understand scripture. He is still blessing us, as Heb. 7:24, 25 says, continuing as our high priest making intercession on our behalf in heaven. When we experience his actions on our behalf, Christ's presence become real in our lives.

**We should praise (vv. 52, 53).** They returned to Jerusalem with a bounce in their step, a gleam in their eye, and praise upon their lips. This is the

demonstration of the reality of Christ's presence in our lives. Men and women who have been with Jesus are changed.

Bartimaeus, the blind man who had spent a lifetime sitting along the side of the road, took to the road following Jesus after having his sight restored. Though Jesus ordered the deaf mute to tell no one how he had been healed, it was to no avail. He had to tell. His life had been changed.

There is no testimony so compelling as the one of a person whose life has been changed. There is also no praise so complete as the praise that comes from a changed heart. If we know his presence, it is because he acted on our behalf to help us overcome our doubts and fears, and it will show in our lives through acts of worship and praise.

White is a member of First Church, Clinton.



White



# Analysis: Animated 'Prince of Egypt' is epic scale

By Phil Boatwright, Editor  
The Movie Reviewer

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (BP) — Taken from the Old Testament Book of Exodus, the story of Moses and the enslaved Hebrews has been vividly brought to animated musical life in "The Prince of Egypt" through the sophisticated work of DreamWorks Studios.

Cinema is a collaborative art form, and nowhere is that more evident than in the animation genre. Voice characterizations, drawings, concept, music, art design — all must blend harmoniously to make a final product that entertains both little ones and the guardians who brought them. As with such classics as "Sleeping Beauty," all of the above elements in DreamWorks' first animated feature prove formidable here as well.

Songsmith Stephen Schwartz (Oscar winner for "Pocahontas") and composer Hans Zimmer ("The Lion King") contribute the musical numbers. Each song is moving, literate, and furthers the story. Overall, the score may not be as memorable as "The Little Mermaid" or "Beauty and the Beast," but two songs, "I Will Get There" and "When You Believe," rank structurally alongside any movie melody written in this past decade.

The voice characteristics, led by Val Kilmer as Moses and Ralph Fiennes as Rameses, are all satisfactory, but the prominent star is the animation itself, in which no expense, it

seems, has been spared. The artwork recounts the story as well as the dialogue. While using color, contrasts, and texture in adroit draftsmanship to highlight emotional experiences in the same way the composer uses music, DreamWorks animators also take full advantage of today's computer-generated imagery. Add to the aesthetic look the spectacular action effects done with the Red Sea miracle and the burning bush sequence, and you have one animated film that will never be referred to as a mere cartoon.

The bottom line for any movie that intends to live on through cinema history is its story. "The Prince of Egypt" succeeds because it is taken from one of the 66 best books ever written, the Bible. The dialogue is rich, simplistic and at times poetic, careful to reverently suggest the meaning of the book which spawned this project.

"The Prince of Egypt" is rated PG for some intensity. Parents should be there to assure little ones during Moses' nightmare and the plague sequence.

It's one thing reading about the Holy



IT'LL GET BETTER — Moses (Val Kilmer) tries to cheer up his brother Rameses (Ralph Fiennes) after they are reprimanded by the Pharaoh.

Sandra Bullock (Miriam, Moses' sister) and Jeff Goldblum (Aaron). Directed by Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells. Produced by Penney Finkelman Cox, Sandra Rabins. Rated PG for some intense action sequences and for subject matter.

Boatwright is a Baptist layman from Thousand Oaks, Calif. He can be contacted at [www.moviereporter.com](http://www.moviereporter.com).

Spirit taking the lives of the firstborn where the house does not display the blood covering. It's another to see a reenactment.

Never condescending or phlegmatic, "The Prince of Egypt" is the perfect blend of epic scale and dramatic intimacy. It is well deserving of the epithet "masterpiece." So DreamWorks, how about a sequel? You've told of the Hebrews' liberator; now how about one concerning the Saviour of the world?

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT — Opens Dec. 18. Starring the voices of Val Kilmer (Moses), Ralph Fiennes (Rameses), Michelle Pfeiffer (Tziporah, wife of Moses),



FAREWELL — Yocheved (Ofra Haza) sings her last lullaby to her baby, hidden in a basket and cast adrift on the river Nile to save his life, in DreamWorks' epic drama "The Prince of Egypt."

## Graham documentary to air on ABC beginning Dec. 27

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—"History is going to remember Billy Graham as perhaps the greatest evangelist this nation, perhaps the world, has seen. He's ministered to so many people all around the world," said former U.S. President George Bush in a new documentary about the life and influence of Billy Graham.

Produced by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) for ABC television, "Common Ground" is not a biography of Graham's life, but rather a documentary about his influence.

In addition to Bush and his wife, the program includes testimonies from former U.S. President Gerald Ford, former Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Kay Coles James, 1936 Olympic athlete Louis Zamperini and entertainers Kathie Lee Gifford, Jerome Hines, and Jeannette Clift George.

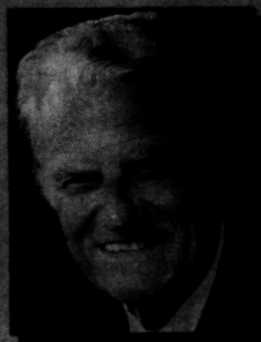
All five of Graham's children and his wife are featured in the program, as is Raymond Damadian, inventor of Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanner (MRI), and Phillip Goudeaux, former member of the Black Panther Party.

Those influenced the most by Billy Graham include the people closest to him — his wife, Ruth, and their five children.

In production since early February, the program will debut on Dec. 27, and local ABC affiliate stations can air it sometime during the eight weeks following the release date. Large markets, such as Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Phoenix are carrying the program the afternoon of the 27th, as are smaller markets like Rochester, N.Y., Spokane, Wash., and Anchorage, Alaska.

For information on air time in a particular market, or to order a copy of the video, call (800) 777-1127.

NAMB's broadcast communications group regularly produces documentaries for ABC and NBC, including "Driving Force," about Christians in the NASCAR racing circuit, and "Circle of the Earth," which featured poignant stories of faith from people in the space program.



Graham

## LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.  
Minister of Counseling  
First Church, Jackson

My fiancé and I continually fight about little things. How do I put up with this until we get married and the situation changes?

Get your head out of the sand! This problem will not go away simply because you've gone through the wedding ceremony. There are obviously unresolved issues which you and your fiancé together have not addressed. You should immediately begin premarital counseling with your pastor or a Christian professional.

Premarital counseling is designed to amplify strengths and identify weaknesses in your relationship, so that the strengths can be used to overcome the weaknesses. Left alone, weaknesses can become land mines in a marriage. What is really behind these blow-ups? Work hard to understand the dynamics and cycles of your relationship, and how you two get into the situation of fighting over such small matters.

Now is the time to begin building a prayer life together. Spend time in prayer with your fiancé — a crucial strength in times of marital strife. Present conflicts should be tackled now, before the wedding, rather than allowing such behavior to

determine the course of your marriage. It would be better to postpone the marriage than to live in a state of war until death do you part.

I've been dating this guy for eight months, and he has yet to kiss me (we're both age 28). I enjoy being with him, but I am concerned about bringing up this subject because he is so sensitive.

Having the quality of sensitivity is good — unless it is used for emotional protection and control. Before you get caught up in a physical relationship with this guy, you should develop healthy communications. Can you talk with him about something like this? After eight months together, there should be enough of a relationship to bring up the matter in a non-threatening way. Take the risk, rather than guessing. Information leads to understanding, and resolving this matter can move the relationship forward. If that is not possible, you must decide whether this situation presents a barrier big enough to keep the relationship from growing toward deeper commitment.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

## Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
copyright 1998

ZRYXOSY, QGUO WCXV  
TVWS YOSURCXÝ XBRX  
KBGNB GY FWYX RCM  
OHWRE; DCVKGCQ XBRX  
TO REYV BRUO R ZRYX-  
OS GC BORUOC.

NVEVYYGRCY PVWS: VCO

Clue: B = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Four Four.